

There's nothing dramatic about Hearts Like Lions. They're from Long Beach, they've been playing together since high school, and they simply love making music. They're humbled when they meet fans, delighted when they play new venues, and when asked why they play, they'll always say the same thing: it's super fun.

It's a good thing they love it; once they started playing they couldn't stop touring. Their debut EP, *These Hands*, was released nearly three years ago, and the six song project has kept them on the road ever since. "It was pretty crazy. We were touring with bands we admired, not bands we ever thought we'd get to share a stage with," explains the band's lead singer, Stephen Ramos. "Although it was an awesome time, it will be nice to play some new material," he laughs, referring to their long-awaited debut full-length, *If I Never Speak Again*, out February 17th on Tooth & Nail Records.

The album is just as straightforward and refreshing as its members. The songs (written by Ramos and fellow bandmates Luke Schoepf, Nick Sturz and Michael Grasseschi) are confrontational anthems, addressing topics like identity, selfishness, and how annoying it is when people try and tell you what to do. The record carries the same nostalgic tone Hearts Like Lions is known for with an authentic edge only they could produce. From the song "Pretty Little Phase," begging people to be themselves, to the record's title track, "If I Never Speak Again," encouraging people to stop only thinking of themselves, the band's debut record is cathartic, honest, and a little agitated. "As men, we've come to this realization that it's uncommon for dudes to talk about their emotions. You think you have to portray this manly persona of someone who doesn't cry or deal with anything, but that isn't honest," explains Ramos. "This record is a chance for us to say, 'Hey, here are our emotions and the crappy things we've walked through.'"

And although the record's title may sound like it's the band's last, *If I Never Speak Again* is anything but. "We have every intention of making more records. We named the album what we did because if we're going to speak, we want to be true to ourselves and our emotions," explains Ramos. "These songs aren't made up stories about other people, it's me dealing with the world. If I never speak again at least I know, and the band knows, we were honest the whole way. And if this album makes even one person feel less alone because they can identify with where we are in our lives," he stresses, "this was worth it."

Hearts Like Lions chose a name they hoped would portray their passion. If the name doesn't do it, the music will.